

M1505
Tuesday, December 24, 1968
Clara Street, San Francisco
Groups I and II

Part one

Mr. Nyland: That's good, and do you have a list of the different people?

Bill McDonnell: I have the wrong thing.

Mr. Nyland: Okay. We'll, uh, you can distribute when I get to that point. Okay?

Bill: It's the original, if you want to play it.

Mr. Nyland: Yeah, good, we'll keep that here. All right.

Gurdjieff always had Christmas parties at that Prieuré, and it was always a very great event. [Aside: Such a noise you make, huh? Thank you, darling.] I remember one year he had quite a number of children, and that was the time when every child got a bicycle. And you can imagine the grounds of Prieuré the next day—how it was. I remember the last Christmas party we had in New York. He was there then and he tried to gather around himself all the different people who were quite close to him and, you might say, 'belonged' to his family. And it was really quite successful because there were a few who in his life had had a definite meaning for him, and it was a very hilarious kind of a party, with a great deal of laughter among us. And there is still some kind of a tape in existence, but I haven't been able to get hold of it because it was one of the ... the beginning of the tapes, when we recorded only on wire and not on tape as we know it now.

But there was one thing about this particular Christmas. For the children he had two kinds of things, and they were able to choose between eight silver dollars and ten ordinary dollars, and each could choose whatever they felt like. And you could see the little children try to decide what—the silver dollars attracted them but there was only eight, and the other dollars, of course it was ten but it had no particular polish or shine—and the ... the difficulty they were in. And I

remember one boy without any question went immediately for the ten dollars and that was it, and I think that he became a good businessman. And I believe that most of the little girls, they chose the silver dollars not knowing the value of money—anyhow it was something that felt heavy in their pocket and they could play with.

Gurdjieff set this with all of that so ... I use the word ‘benevolence.’ Because it was such consideration of what really could create a certain sense of feeling for them, and he watched and he sat quietly, very much like a father watching his children perform and behave in a certain way. And I ... I will never forget that particular evening because it made such an impression. It was the last evening of his life on Earth. Whatever Gurdjieff meant, whenever he was like that for all of us we felt as if there was a family and Gurdjieff actually had interest in all of us, and of course whenever there was any particular question that one wanted to talk about or that had to be decided, Gurdjieff could always find time. This was after Gurdjieff had finished, of course, writing All and Everything, and at that time—that period when he had finished and when finally the finishing touches to the publication were done—Gurdjieff had a different kind of attitude as really a *pater familias*, almost you might say ‘finishing up’ the last part of his life and wanting to end it by leaving that kind of benevolent impression on us.

I do not know to what extent Gurdjieff had the ideals about the continuation of his Work. I do remember a lunch we had, which was the last lunch—also, the next day he went back to France ... in which he had a few of us together and when he gave certain indications of the kind of Work that he would like to have continued. But it was always for us with an idea that Gurdjieff would still be in Paris, and we never realized that he would not make that particular trip again to America. And that although some of us went over to France during the last year, it was the last year we saw him. And when he left he said, “I will come back, but no one will recognize me.” And I remember at that moment when he said it, it struck me as something that I didn’t want to think about; and very soon after I had forgotten, because the assumption for us was always that Gurdjieff would be there.

And of course this is the whole question: That how can Gurdjieff continue to be there, and what kind of belief can one have in his presence even at the present time when he is already dead for several years. I think as far as Work is concerned, if one actually starts with becoming honest about oneself and that one starts to develop—or tries to make—conditions such that something must take place in one; and that gradually one’s inner life becomes more pronounced and that

there is, then, a possibility of feeding that instead of all the time feeding the surface. So that gradually the kind of manifestations take on a deeper kind of a color and that there is much more depth to one's life; that together with this there is an increased sensitivity on the part of a Man, and when he then in his moments can be quiet and be with himself and, you might say, tries to contemplate what he 'really' is and tries to come to the realization of that what he is essentially is—really he, and where his life should reside—that he then has a definite tendency to wish to take life away from the manifestations. And that one goes through a certain period of reducing the activities of one's life—that one doesn't want to be so boisterous, maybe, or even sometimes so talkative, or that one learns how to be silent and to be with oneself—and how at the same time one becomes less and less dependent on the outside world.

I think it is a lesson we have to learn: That in the midst of ordinary life and being affected—as we always are by ordinary life as it is, because that is what is the fate of Man on Earth—that he has to learn to find out what it is for himself to remain within himself, and even if any kind of an affair goes on and, of course, affects one and it starts to penetrate a little, that there is a force in oneself which prevents such penetration to go too far.

That is really the problem of one's life, and when one thinks about it at Christmas—of course, the particular situation of re-birth in which there is something that one celebrates—and one need not be a Christian in order to celebrate Christmas. Because that what is the symbol of Christmas is not necessarily linked up with Christianity; it's a very good thing that Christmas is at the end of the year, and you might say it is very fortunate to some extent... Because the 25th and 26th—two Christmas days, as you know we celebrate that in Europe—the first day is Christmas for the family. It starts of course with Christmas Eve, but there is no celebration of the kind that we have here... There is Christmas morning particularly for the children to find out then what is under the tree, and then Christmas Day is a celebration for the family as a whole when they have the children, and there is no particular family ... any other member that is allowed—and surely no friends—and the evening of Christmas Day is when the tree is lit, but the 26th is a Christmas celebration ... always as the second day of Christmas, in which one makes visits to friends and then celebrates with them. It's quite separate and kept apart from a family. When it is a family and one understands then that because of this fortunate event of having it at the end of the year and connected with the possibility of, I call it 'rebirth' or some form of 'renaissance' in which one is reminded every year at the end of that year to look over whatever

the year has given, and to make plans so that they can be executed and evolved during the little period between now and New Year's Day; that then when the new year starts the plans could have been made and then one starts to Work in accordance with what one has decided.

So Christmas becomes the period in which one comes to oneself; and for coming to oneself one has to realize what is really that what has bound us also in the past year and whatever has been the particular experiences that one has gone through, and to see if there is a possibility of valuating them, to see what they have given and in what respect that what actually has taken place has affected one; and that one starts to compare the beginning of a year with the end, and here one is now again facing a new year and in what way will I now face it and what has contributed to a further understanding of myself regarding myself, and what is it that I wish to be reborn each year.

Why is it that I could not be born once and for all in a spiritual sense in exactly the same as when I'm born physically—that I don't really have to care very much anymore, than only to maintain oneself. The difficulty with Christmas is that I have to start a spiritual possibility, a conception of some kind, which conception is then allotted only seven days before the first of the year and then it must be born; because then I face the new year as it perhaps should be lived by me, and my determination during that little period will have to result in that what I think can happen to me. What is it that one then tries to think, and in what respect...

[Aside (concerning a child talking): Could you take her away. Go over to the other side. If she wants to talk it's all right, but let her talk over there. It's a little too disturbing. No, it's all right. When the children are quiet it's okay. And it is unfortunate that, although this is a Children's Christmas, that we still insist in talking like grown-up people. At the same time, I don't want Christmas to go by without a reminder, and you also know that my intention is all the time to try to formulate, if possible, for your help. Because for me, my life of course is behind me and I am, you might say, 'in retirement,' and all I wish to do is to keep on reminding. Because I have no particular desire to continue to live for my own sake. I'm finished as far as that is concerned, but I know what I am, I also know what will come.]

...and when one looks at the end of the year as a possibility then of determining, one has to look what has happened and to what extent one has been bound during this whole year by one's personality—all the manifestations of oneself, all forms of behavior, all forms of superficiality, all forms which belong to Earth, all the different kind of things that one has to go through and

puts in words, and sometimes certain concepts which definitely belong to an Earthly life and trying to find within this Earth, to the extent that it is able, to give us an insight in oneself—then one starts to find out what it is really that binds one to this Earth, and then how to loosen up or to become free as a Man should be.

This whole question of Christmas, when one connects it with the word ‘Christ’ and then says “Jesus” and Jesus then being born in Bethlehem... And it was not on the 25th of December, because the dates were set in accordance with the early Christians in connection with the Roman festivity so that they could celebrate by themselves without being noticed and getting into the arms of the law. So the fact that the 25th I say is ‘fortunate’: because it gives us a chance to determine that whatever Jesus meant with his life became apparent in the affix of Christ to his name; and that there’s an enormous difference between Jesus and Christ, and that Jesus is Man as we are, and Christ is that what enables us to become what we should be.

So that this whole concept of a Christian would be to live in accordance with principles as enunciated by him in the Bible and, to the extent we can understand it, that we then can apply it in our life. But so much of the Bible is hidden, and it is not clear entirely of what is the meaning of the different words going through different translations probably, than only this one thing: that there was a necessity in his life not to be understood. That is, that finally whatever he gave was not enough to convince the powers that were around him, and that only very few could understand what was really the meaning, like the disciples; and then they, having received instructions to wait for the Holy Ghost to descend on them, that Christ had to be sacrificed for the purpose of a new life.

Christ in oneself, is Work. You see, it is a form of adjustment, of making an atonement with oneself. An atonement means to become One regarding one’s self when one is scattered during the last year because of all kind of influences. That during this little period I try to become, as much as I can, an entity; and that that what takes place in Man when he decides to do this, is that because of this unity within himself he becomes free from a great deal of his ordinary manifestations because they have no place anymore.

The difference between an entity and that out of which the entity has arisen, is simply that it faces two sides of the possibilities of a Man; and the way we look at the past year is from the standpoint of the components of the three centers functioning in a personality, and the way we wish to look is as a unit dependable on, in many ways, a Oneness which then can face the world

as we will have to face it in the coming year. And that this particular point at which this can happen—as if one is then a personality with two faces, one looking back and the other, like Janus, looking in the future—and that process that must take place, is a conversion process in which all of one's manifestations and feelings and thoughts, somehow or other ought to be combined and unified. And the difficulty is that we all the time get lost in whatever we have experienced and we look back at the manifestations only; without seeing what was really essentially us and without even seeing our life than only what came through the manifestations, and that what we consider the suffering of ourselves has to do with the behavior forms in contact with different people who could not understand us and on whom we were dependent because we expected something from them.

At Christmas we don't expect anything anymore. When presents have been given and received, one is free. It does not require you to give another present again, and come under bondage. Christmas is a period of acquisition of freedom through the possibility of the fusion of what one is now, as a three centered being and representing a personality, into an Individual which is a unit by itself and which starts out the new year with all the facets in One and with his inner life as the final decisive factor for the wish to continue to live.

What we learn, simply by means of Work, is how to Work on oneself to create that unity; and because of that the freedom which is then possible as a unified state, will not allow to go back and constantly harp on the things that we have gone through and which, by this time, must be finished. Because when I go from three to One, I am in One and not in the three any longer. And although I will have memories of this year in the next year, the emphasis should be that that what is memory serves me now to look into the future; so that at the time when I say I wish to become in this moment 'Awake,' that then in that kind of a presence of myself I look towards what I wish to become in the future, and expect that with faith.

The turning point of that is in the present, in which then the understanding of Christ can become a part of me; and then when I know what is meant by that, he embodies me and I then, because of that kind of concept, meet God on the threshold of the new year, wishing Him then to tell me constantly—again, if you wish, through Christ; that is, through my attitude to wish to sacrifice that what is needed and to be able to continue without being even understood by anybody—that something in me is now a solidity on which I wish to stand when I face all kind of difficulties in this new year.

It is for that reason a question of hope. Because one forgets then what one has lived through; it has had its value, its usefulness; it must have given one energies of certain kinds, and there is no use to dwell on it any further. Because that what Christ means for one, is to say “Forget, now, because there is the possibility of a new birth.” As if one becomes like a child, again looking at that what is new for the rest of the new year—or rather, that what is now the rest of this year—facing the new year as if one is reborn and faces the world as a child would face it: with all the possibilities of new impressions and not as yet—and not anymore—affected by the conditions of life as they have been.

Christmas means much more than a birthday, because it is a unity of all people and can then, if it is understood, produce peace among us. As a Group of us—as we are here and, thank God, celebrating something in this place—will give a certain cachet to this Clara Street so that I hope that when later you will remember, you will remember something of this kind of attempt we have made, feeble as it may have been and perhaps not in every respect so satisfactory; that at least you have a memory and I hope that in recalling it, that something will still be there, almost I would say, ‘alive’ in you.

The problem of keeping things alive, the problem of having to face the world as a unit, will always be with us. Because as soon as you start with the new year, the three functions of our personality will continue. And to remain strong enough to be able to connect them and to fuse them into One at times, will require the kind of Silence I talked about and the wish to be benevolent to one’s shortcomings and to include, in that, the realization that all of us are in exactly that same state and that because of us ... because of that maybe we can feel, we can really love each other because we know the struggles that are involved in one’s own life and in everybody else’s.

It is not more or less difficult for anyone. All of us face the same thing—that is, the desire we have to Wake Up—and all of us have the difficulty of overcoming the laws of Earth, and all of us have to learn to understand this principle of Christ-like behavior: Dying in order to be resurrected, dying with the knowledge that that what is taking place with one’s life is nothing compared with that what should be; that that ... that when I die that I know I’m not understood, that when I start again with my life I know it might end exactly in that way: of the sacrifice of a physical body so that that what could remain in the last word of the cross, then I can be united. Almost that one can say then “Here I am,” offering myself in devotion to that what is the reality

of myself.

If one can look at this, if one can remember in such simplicity. Because after all, what are we: Just ordinary human beings with experiences, with intensity sometimes of suffering, with a determination that life is still worthwhile, with the desire to continue to try to understand it and to find out what is what for ourselves in all our multiplicity and the different ways by which we are exposed to the rest of the world. And the rest of the world taking from us constantly our energy, and not having enough strength to hold it back and to stay within oneself and not to allow them to affect us.

All of that will happen again and again in the new year. There is not going to be that kind of a change in the rest of the world, because we don't live in peace. But we could be peaceful within by building ... and again one says 'Kesdjianian' body, whatever that may mean; whatever it is that one says emotionally I am 'strong' regardless of whatever affects me, I am what I am within; and to keep on repeating this "I Am," not perhaps meaning—with "I"—that what we usually understand now as an Objective something, but with this "I" I look towards the future and I then wish to connect, from my emotional level, with that what I believe in that is the Father, that that what I say with "Am" is the understanding of myself which is for me the Son as Jesus lived on Earth, and that what is my wish in connecting the two and in living in the present becomes for me the Holy Ghost, which then tells me what is right and what is wrong and then, for my life after this physical existence, becomes the guide temporarily, you might say, 'replacing' the possibility of a Soul since the Soul hasn't been born sufficiently to be grown up. So that the "I" takes on the shape of a Kesdjianian body temporarily having my life and telling me that although it is now of a different level, not everything has been settled as yet; and that there will be one Christmas after another in order to reinforce and to build—again and again, each year based on the experience of the past—that what I wish to become and realizing, each Christmas, how I was bound in the past year. This kind of prayer that one wants to be helped; that is, that one wants to find what it is that Christ can mean as a representation of the son of God, that I with that what is my physical body could become the replica of that in relation to that what should be my Soul but having to do, at the present time and within the possibilities of myself only at the present, what is possible now to be functioning with the Holy Ghost as the guide leading me away from Earth and towards more freedom.

In that sense I will be ... the German word is *erlosen*: it will be a delivery ... deliverance

from that what I am physically. Christmas is preparing for one's death, although we celebrate a birth. It is the realization of one's life from beginning to end. It is the beginning as life, ending at Easter. It is a period in the beginning of the first ... the first part of the year in which constantly this thought should be there: "But, I live now." How long will I continue. What is it at the present time that I have to learn during this period when I celebrate ... real celebration of the possibility of perfecting myself and then reach freedom through physical death. What is needed for me, in this new year, to understand how I, during this lifetime, can become free from my physical self. How can I understand my body to become a servant so it will not have any particular voice of its own, than only that what my Consciousness and my Conscience can tell this body how to behave. Then I can die at Easter sufficiently to enable that what is Consciousness and Conscience to continue to exist.

Every time it becomes a preparation, the closer one comes to the end of one's life. Be afraid of dying too soon. Be afraid that you don't use the time which is allotted to you. Be afraid of wasting your energies. Be afraid of dwelling constantly on the past as a loss of energy. Leave it behind. Don't look back to Sodom and Gomorrah and crystallize out as a pillar of salt. Because you will be unable to move when you crystallize out into the forms of ordinary Earth. If you emphasize too much the desires of your body and do not go against it, if you emphasize too much the manifestations of yourself and hang onto them and don't want to give them up because somehow or other they are still almost the only trust you have in yourself, it is simply because you don't dare to go ahead and to some extent even become adventurous to trust that what is in embryo, that it will continue to grow if you only feed it; but that Work is the only way by which you can feed it, and the more you are in contact with that what is the past and you keep on repeating it, the worse it will be for you to actually free yourself in building something that could become your 'I' for the future.

This is the determination that I think one should consider during the time between Christmas and New Year: That I want to make up my mind and my heart regarding my wish to Work; to Work on myself; naturally, to Work in order to become free, to Work in order to understand my bondage, to Work so that I then know that by means of that I use the principle of Christ as exemplified in the life of Jesus for me, and using then that as a messenger from Above to remind me of my task on Earth as long as I live here.

I hope we all will remember the new year, but I hope we will remember the fact that we

were born for a purpose on Earth and that it is up to us to find the aim and the meaning and the reason for one's own existence.

Do we have any Armagnac to drink?

Answer: Yes.

Mr. Nyland: Then we will drink to the next year based on the understanding of the meaning of Christmas for us. [toast]

Part two

Mr. Nyland: As you know, I consider Group I the mainstay of the total movement here in San Francisco, Berkeley, Palo Alto, and surrounding country. And therefore upon them rests a very special responsibility: They have to maintain Work as well as they can, and they have to have an influence on the Groups II and all the different members who aspire gradually to learn what it is to Work. So I consider them special, and I would like to do something to remember that. And I thought that ... what can I do. I do not know really if it is appropriate what I had in mind; because I have to give something from myself, and accidentally we played piano in order to test which, uh, recorders or to use a little different way of recording, and there is a tape of that particular recording and I thought if we make a copy for each one member of Group I, maybe you would like that as a present from me.

I'm sorry it happens to be my music, but that's all I can give. It does not mean that I particularly put any value on it. You have to look for the value in my wish to give you something, and that I hope that that as a symbol represents a little bit of my feeling or affection I have for you as a Group—as a Group as a whole—and I hope that you will take it as such. Bill tried to copy, last night, about thirty tapes. There is a little difficulty in the copying, the machines did not function quite well and that therefore that what you will receive is not entirely up to scratch—I'm sorry for that. Also the time is a little short to give it to you in a box in which we now at the present time sell music, but it will come in time. Take what there is. The recording of certain copies are a little wavy and may not be right in a general way—it is all right, you will get a good copy as soon as we can substitute what you now get for, let's call it, the more 'real' thing. And then I don't know... Bill, will you give them.

Bill: Yes, I will.

Mr. Nyland: Where are you, Bill.

Bill: Right here.

Mr. Nyland: And I don't know how to finish this kind of evening, because I've talked enough. I can always say this is the end—still, maybe that is not right. Then I can say I can play a little music, and perhaps that isn't right either. And then I thought that perhaps we could play this tape and you could listen to it. Then you might say you know what you are getting. And maybe in that, since it was '*à l'improviste*—it was not meant for anything special than just an ordinary affair of ordinary life, it was not meant to be as a performance so it was much more common of myself as it went—most likely as a certain expression of my life as it was in a very ordinary form, and because of that it has a certain quality and maybe that is what we should do.

I wish you all a good Christmas Day tomorrow. I won't see you tomorrow. I'll be here Thursday. Thursday evening: first Movements and then Group I, after that perhaps—I'm not quite sure—I may play a little. Friday we'll go to Seattle, this time flying. I had to postpone ... or change the plans of going by car. It would have taken quite a bit of time and difficulties as far as Medford is concerned or in returning, because the climate is not so good anymore to camp overnight. But there is something else and I'll be very honest with you, I was a little disappointed. And it may be due to the holidays, it may be due also to being a little overfed, it may be because when you get too much you become lazy, maybe you were reducing a little bit your enthusiasm because it has, in many ways, become like something you already know and perhaps the fervor of Work is a little bit less—in any event I got the impression of less enthusiasm of something that I feel that should be there.

I look at this simply from the standpoint of, "Here is something that I firmly believe in that could be of use to you." There is something that perhaps you don't appreciate, and it is really not up to me to tell you what it is that would cause real appreciation for you. Because in my own experience I know the difference—to have to go without a book or without tapes, or even for many months at a time without Gurdjieff—and I know how eager we were and how, when opportunities were given, including the period of Orage when he was in New York, how we sacrificed everything—time, energy, money—for the sake of Work. And sometimes I think that you're spoiled. And that may be because you live in this particular day and age, and you're not so sensitive anymore. And to my way of thinking, there is something wrong. Because you are too superficial and there is not enough left of the depth of your life that you can recognize; and that you don't know what it means to be really alive because industrial development has killed

some of the desires which should be there and there is not enough of the wish for that kind of simplicity, and as a result you don't recognize anymore what you have. I call it sometimes then 'over-feeding' and then of course it is my fault, and that perhaps later you will discover something that, at the present time, your eyes are closed to.

And it is not respect for me. Don't mistake me. Don't think that I mean that. I mean respect for a possibility of a way out of your life towards something. That you must, if you have any sense about yourself, realize that it is that kind of a necessity. It is a requirement for each person on this Earth to have a Soul, and to build it. That is the responsibility that is laid on to you by the higher forces and, to the extent that you understand what is the meaning of His Endlessness in your life, that here is something that actually you can use. And it is esoteric knowledge that is made available in some form or other which will be for you, if you wish, Infinite because it will never, never stop for you if you honestly wish it.

And then when I say, "Here, we can go to Seattle"—and of course I happen to be the center, because I happen to come here to tell you about it and I know that I am responsible for this kind of activity and for that reason I feel that it is necessary, every once in a while, to feed it and to help you to make sure that you are still correct and exact in your language and that you do know and adhere to that what is the truth as far as Work on yourself is concerned—and then you don't consider it really, those who are a little older in Work, than only that you have some kind of a reason why it cannot be done. And of course I say, "Forget it." As you probably remember, I've done it before—I have planned for a trip and cancelled it. And you can expect that of me, and at a certain time you can expect of me that I will say "Good-bye" to all of you and forget you.

So that is one of the reasons why I now will fly. I'll be back Sunday night. Monday there is a meeting. From that we have one week here, including New Year's Eve when we have a meeting here. New Year's Day, then there is a meeting in Palo Alto with Groups II of Berkeley, Palo Alto and San Francisco. Thursday—again, Group I. Friday—maybe music, in any event Movements continue. Saturday—we will see what. Sunday—most likely the Land. The following Monday is the last meeting for Groups III and II, and Tuesday following we will leave. There is the schedule. It's up to you to extract as much as you possibly can.

The opportunities of this kind are measured. They happen, but not too often, and when you can take, for God's sake take! Because you will stand, some day, in front of yourself and you

will then say, “How god-damned stupid I was.” I have had that experience. I know—wishing to depend on Gurdjieff, and having to face the fact of his death—and that’s why I’m telling you.

Try to remember. Try to remember yourself. Try to remember, if you can, what came into your life. And if you wish to know that, try to see what would be the value of your life without Work.

So then, Jerry, we’ll put that tape on. All right? Have you got it? Okay.

Jerry: Does this turn off?

Mr. Nyland: Yes, turn it off.

End of tape